WONDERFUL WOOD

—forest products are part of everyday life

By Gloria Van Duyne

While digging through my purse to locate a pen, one of my co-workers commented that the tube of toothpaste I had just dumped onto my desk contained wood. I laughed, but then realized he was serious, so I asked him to explain. He then described how cellulose and chemicals derived from wood are used as fiber filler for plastics (tool handles, football helmets and eyeglass frames), and also ingredients in hairspray, cosmetics and my toothpaste.

Of course, I was very familiar with the usual uses of wood (for furniture making and firewood), but I'd never really thought about other uses and products. I mean, wood in my toothpaste and lipstick—who knew?

Our discussion expanded to the topic of cellulose—the basic building block of the cell walls of all plants, and considered a complex carbohydrate—from wood, and how it is increasingly used in processed foods: high fiber foods (crackers, breads and waffles), diet drink mixes, food texture enhancers, food thickeners (used in ketchup and pancake syrup) and as a substitute for fat in ice cream.

Courtesy Stickley Furniture

When I went home that night, I decided to look around my house, and was surprised by what I found. I never realized how many things are made from wood, and how much of it was created from tree species that grow in New York.

On first glance, the obvious items in my house stood out: hardwood floors, desks, book cases, beds, dressers, tables and chairs, kitchen and bathroom cabinets, picture frames, and the guitar and piano. But as I looked closer, I

realized there was so much more, such as the siding, decking and framing—studs, joists, rafters—of the house, as well as the framing in my couch and upholstered chairs. In fact, as I really examined my home, I spied a seemingly endless number of things made from wood.

Everyday items like cooking spoons, kebob skewers, matches, cutting board, board games, ping pong paddles, closet doors and molding were all made from wood. I also found boxes and packaging for everything from staples and other office supplies to all kinds of food packages including juice boxes, milk cartons, egg containers, and frozen dinners, just to name a few. Looking in my garage and outside I noted the tool handles, my mailbox, trellises, bark mulch, firewood and bird houses. The list went on and on.

When I added in the paper products—books, photos, greeting cards, printer paper, toilet paper, napkins, my son's homework—it seemed as though virtually everything was connected to wood. Even the labels on plastic, glass and metal cans were made from paper!

Recalling my earlier discussion at work, I read labels and discovered cellulose listed as an ingredient in my hairspray, toothpaste, liquid nail polish, soap, laundry detergent, and several of my cosmetics, including my mascara and lipstick. Likewise, the crackers and pancake mix in the cupboard, and the ice cream in my freezer also contained a form of cellulose. To me, it was fascinating and exciting, and it reinforced my feelings about the importance of our wood industry. I've always been proud to be involved with forestry—especially the renewable resource aspect of it—and love the fact that our trees provide so many benefits.

James Clayton

Many everyday items are made of wood or contain wood cellulose, including toothpaste, high-fiber cereal, vitamins and children's toys.

When it comes right down to it, trees are amazing. They provide us with basic amenities (food and shelter); can be used for fuel, furniture, toys, fabric; and are part of an endless list of products we use every day. I take comfort in the fact that when managed sustainably, our forests will continue to provide these valuable resources for future generations.

Gloria Van Duyne works for DEC's Division of Lands and Forests.

If you own a woodlot, you may find the following resources helpful for properly managing your land:

NYS DEC's Landowner Assistance Program: DEC foresters work with landowners to develop management actions tailored to meet individual ownership goals. Topics covered include wildlife habitat improvement, erosion control, tree planting, recreation enhancement, sugar bush management and silviculture. Check out **www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4972.html** for more information, including information about federal cost-sharing programs and state property tax reduction programs.

New York Forest Owners Association: NYFOA is a grassroots organization of NYS woodlot owners that promotes sustainable forestry and improved stewardship on privately owned woodlands. Local volunteers work with DEC, Cooperative Extension, Cornell University and SUNY-ESF, to provide seminars, facilitate on-site guidance, woodswalks and other services to help fellow woodlot owners achieve their personal forest objectives (improved wildlife habitat, overall forest health, pure water and air, wood products, recreation). **http://nyfoa.org**

Cornell Cooperative Extension ForestConnect: ForestConnect offers landowners educational workshops offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension or partner organizations, as well as advice from a trained forest-owner volunteer, a Master Forest Owner and CCE educators to help landowners plan for the continued health of their private forest land. **www2.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/forestconnect**

Nick Lund

New York Grown

With 18.95 million acres of trees (63 percent of the state's land area), New York is rich with forests. Of those, hardwoods like maple, birch, beech, oak, poplar and ash dominate the landscape. Because of the diversity and quality of our lumber, a number of companies have made New York home, including: Steinway Pianos, Finch Paper, Harden Furniture, Stickley Furniture, AMF Bowling Products (pins and lanes), Beaver Mountain Log Homes, Catskill Craftsmen (cutting boards and cabinetry), Rawlings Adirondack baseball bats, Ames True Temper ash tool handles, and TC Timber/Habermaas wooden toy trains and tracks.

The wood-using industry is an extremely important part of New York's economy, and plays a major role in the responsible harvest and management of New York's forests. For a directory of individuals and companies that primarily utilize lumber or other semi-finished wood products connected to the state's forests, check out the Directory of Secondary Wood-Using Industry at **www.dec.ny.gov/lands/33307.html** on DEC's website.

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